

March 2024

'Luke before we leap'

Wyciffe Bible Translators



News from the **Rowbory Family** serving in Nigeria

Luke 8:22-52 Fear and Faith

One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's go over to the other side of the lake."... As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came... the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger... Jesus got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. "Where is **your faith**?" he asked his disciples. **In fear** and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes... met by a demon-possessed man from the town... When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they **were afraid**... all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were **overcome with fear**... A woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her... Then the woman... came trembling and fell at his feet... he said to her, "Daughter, **your faith** has healed you. Go in peace."... Jesus said to Jairus, "**Don't be afraid; just believe**, and she will be healed." (NIV84)

In January and February I've been making regular trips to work with the Ashɛ translation and literacy team in their office, and to help them along in their work. It's 6 hours of driving for at most 5 hours of time with the team and I might easily plough through as much training, planning and research as possible, but it's also important to spend a significant chunk at the start of each day together reading aloud from big chunks of the Ishɛ scriptures (Luke's gospel) and modelling for the team how we take it seriously. I can't manage all the discussion in Ishɛ myself, but we use Ishɛ language as much as we can.

Last Tuesday we considered much of Luke chapter 8 from verse 22, noticing how Jesus showed his followers how they should turn from **agōōi iwei** (hearing fear) to **ajēhē ijii** (trusting) him. Fear is very familiar to us all; we're easily overwhelmed with fear of people, sickness, death, failure, uncertainty and change, whether in Ashɛ land or Jos or the UK, but Jesus has come to sort that out and we need to take him seriously.

May God help us practically trust in Jesus as we reflect on what the first disciples saw and learned.

Before David's (45th) birthday last Saturday we enjoyed celebrating **leapling** colleague Rachel's 7th birthday (born 29th Feb 1996), and we've started this **leap** year trying to **leap** ahead in Ashɛ translator training and literacy, and also in homeschool. Read to the end and you'll hear something of the range of interesting visitors who have stayed with us – eight since October.

David: Equipping Ashɛ to be translators

Since the New Year I've focussed on training and equipping the Ashɛ team, helping them discover and take on board the linguistic skills, patterns of teamwork and technical understanding they need to do translation well. It's encouraging to me that the neighbouring Waci and Miyā teams are following a similar path, and I meet up to compare notes with Richard (and Anna and Rachel) who work with those teams.

The 3 teams, Ashɛ, Wachi and Miyā, are studying traditional storytelling and starting some Greek study and other Bible background. These go hand-in-hand, because for us to have a really good discussion of the best way to translate the New Testament, the translators need a sense of how Greek connects with or differs from their languages, and how the history, culture and geography of Israel matches their own place, or not. We shared olives, olive oil, flatbread, and more. The translators tasted grapes for the first time and are still chewing over what to call them in Ishɛ language, "How would you describe this to someone who had never seen or tasted it before? What would you compare it with?"



3. Chairman Monday tasting grapes;

4. Bridget passing a 'taste of translation' booklet to a neighbouring community.

Studying Ashε storytelling went up a notch when we collected more dynamic stories told by older women, who often were pre-literate. English makes heavy use of wee connector words like 'and' and 'but', but Ishε doesn't. In one story of 240 clauses we saw only 23 conjunctions (always 'ni'), and a story of 280 clauses only needed 16 conjunctions. We knew from the recordings, that these stories were captivating, so it would be a bad mistake to simply translate English 'and' (or Greek δε and και) as 'ni'. It's vital to bring the translation team along on this journey of discovery to understand what makes the stories flow and fit together. Another technique often used in Greek (and English) storytelling, mentioning information earlier than normal in a sentence, turns out to be used very rarely and for only limited purposes in Ishε storytelling. Again, we would be badly letting down our Ashε listeners and readers if we unthinkingly follow Greek patterns of word order and neglect the right ways to highlight turning points and surprises in Ishε.

Repetition, repetition, repetition, draaaaaaaw—ing words out and using other kinds of intonation we don't have symbols for yet, all play a vital role, but we need to figure out how to use these tools appropriately!

Alongside all this I'm very excited to have a colleague **Bridget on board** since November, helping research and write up how Ishε consonants, vowels and tones all really work, within and between words. With all the other translation checking, project organisation, community engagement, literacy and translator training work I've been doing, I couldn't give it the focussed attention that it needs. Bridget told the Ashε team that being white, some people jokingly call her Farin Gada, or 'white bridge' in Hausa, and that has firmly stuck as her nickname! 'Farin Gada' also has

experience helping translators craft Bible stories orally, giving our team another effective tool for understanding and translating the Bible even if it ends up in written form.

So, while everyone on the team would love to make progress by leaps and bounds, this leap year, we're definitely making steady tortoise-like progress, and we're doing it together.

Julie: A leap year for homeschool

Now that we have been back in Nigeria for several months, the **homeschooling** routine is well-established and the girls have been getting on well. One of the things we enjoy about homeschooling is how it enables the girls to develop interests in addition to the subjects they have to do. For **Rebekah**, that interest was learning lots of modern languages which she's been able to continue at boarding school. **Elizabeth** loves maths and has been getting into some computer programming. **Abigail** enjoys history and has recently taken up Latin and Greek and often wants to know which language English words come from. **Helen** has been enjoying learning about the human skeleton and a bit of UK geography — she can now show you where Anglesey is and is very amused that there is such a place as the Scilly Isles.

If you were to drop in on a typical day you would find them scattered about the house, working away in various places, and occasionally up a tree, or being 'trapped' by a cat and being unable to escape back to their desk. Sometimes a musical mood takes over and out comes Elizabeth's French horn or trumpet, and Abigail's clarinet, or someone sits at the keyboard.



Give thanks to God for many answers to prayer:

1. **Rebekah's making good progress at boarding school**, freeing Julie to give Elizabeth, Abigail and Helen more attention. The **homeschool girls are well motivated** and making good progress.
2. Several **Ashε training events**, arts, storytelling and literacy events have taken off well expanding our involvement in the community.
3. As I'm often pulled in different directions advising the Ashε project in many areas and helping mentor colleagues, I'm grateful for **Bridget helping study and write up** the way Ishε uses sounds.
4. We got **tenants** for our Glasgow flat in January, which is very welcome financially.

Join with us to ask God for:

1. Good preparations for the next round of Easter Mark Drama performances in Kano and around Jos; getting the cast to really internalise Mark's gospel well is crucial and there are no short-cuts.
2. **Bridget to get the data and insights** to help Ashε writers distinguish words that are easily confused.
3. Pray as a **family** here and in the UK we would **help each other love and trust the Lord Jesus** more each day.
4. As our **translation organisation grows rapidly** and tackles many new projects, pray for cohesion, clarity, calm and discernment sitting at Jesus' feet together.
5. Smooth visa applications and travel for David Forbes accompanying Rebekah on her Easter visit.

Thanks for your support and participation in building God's worldwide kingdom.

Love from David, Julie, Rebekah, Elizabeth, Abigail and Helen

Bonus extra bit – the blessing of Visitors

Soon after we returned from the UK in October, we had **Katie Piggot** from Glasgow stay with us for a couple of weeks as she helped introduce the Mark Drama to our colleagues. She was obviously busy with the Mark Drama, but we loved having her stay with us, and she got to meet a huge range of our colleagues involved in translation, linguistics, literacy, arts and encouraging people to use the scriptures well. If you're around Glasgow and know Katie, do ask her more about it.

After our biggest yet annual conference finished, and **Katie** left, American and Nigerian colleagues Christina and Bernard got married and we hosted their friend **Lily** from America who had visited in 2022. Our Canadian colleague **Jono** came and stayed with us for a couple of weeks too in November and then again in January while he was working with the Nyankpa team in Jos, and brought us some nice chocolate chips and other Canadian goodies. Our Dutch colleague **Janneke** who works in literacy far to the west of us stayed with us before and after Christmas too, with Elizabeth kindly giving up her room to be guest room 3 when the house was rather full.

But then over Christmas we had the great excitement of having **Rebekah** visit us, accompanied by **Ailsa** Hamilton from Glasgow. It was Ailsa's first time to Nigeria, but she had visited the Rowbory family in Uganda during a turbulent time in the mid-1980s, and we're glad to say everything stayed more peaceful for us in 2023/2024. Again, Ailsa met a lot of our colleagues and friends, hearing their stories and how different people had come to follow Jesus. She was intrigued to be called (very respectfully) 'Grandma' by many she met, and if you get a chance to talk to Ailsa she's bound to have much she could tell you from her visit. (She was quite badly sick in hospital a week or so after returning to Glasgow, but she's doing much better now and met a whole load of Nigerian nurses and the occasional doctor in hospitals. They in turn were fascinated to hear of her impressions of Nigeria.)

It was great having Rebekah back with us and the house became a lot livelier and louder over Christmas as sisters caught up together again. Rebekah got to hang out with friends here, and we thank God that the flights, baggage, visas and immigration control worked out OK.

No sooner had Rebekah and Ailsa left than we had **Jono** back again from Canada for a couple of weeks and **Sarah**, a recent graduate from Cambridge, came for two months, staying in Rebekah's room. She has thrown herself into lots of different aspects of our Bible translation and discipleship ministry and accompanied me and others on trips around different projects and villages, getting a taste of some of the range of things we do. Helen, Abigail and Elizabeth have definitely enjoyed borrowing a replacement bigger sister and we've had a lot of fun together. As a British-born and Europe-raised Nigerian she had visited relatives in Lagos before but spending time in rural settings and in the north of Nigeria has all been new. She'll leave a hole when she returns to the UK in mid-March, and we pray that God might make it clear to her what role she might play in helping people use translated scripture in Nigeria, or anywhere else.

Finally in the last 2 weeks we've had a chance to host our former neighbour, **Matthew**, based in Liverpool with his family since 2019. He's visiting to help with more linguistic research for exciting new translation projects. We would love it if the whole family could come back and stay next door again, but in the meantime it's great to catch up a little with him, and benefit from his wisdom and years of experience teaching and working with Nigerian languages.

We look forward to more visitors coming by, and we've been truly enriched by all these colleagues and friends staying with us. There's always so much to talk, think and pray together about.

